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Community holds key to curb spread of IS militants

MELAKA: It is not the power of the police, army or might of sophisticated weapons which serve as the bastion to curb the spread of the so-called IS militant dogma in the country.

Rather, what the authorities need to effectively fuel its battle against the IS movement's influence over the people, especially youths, is total cooperation of the Malaysian community, says Melaka CID chief ACP Raja Shahrom Raja Abdullah.

He said the community not only played the primary role of serving as a channel of information but also an entity to monitor and advise groups which might be targeted by the IS.

"If an individual is involved with IS-backed militants, the first people to get a whiff of such a link will be the community nearest to the target groups, and not the authorities.

"It is therefore, unfair to assume the authorities are 100 per cent responsible to contain any IS-backed group...the authorities are unable to monitor everyone and therefore, the community should assist (the authorities to curb the spread of the IS dogma)," he told Bernama in a recent interview.

A total of 61 Malaysians, including 10 women were found to have

joined IS militants in Syria while more than 71 people have been detained in Malaysia for alleged links with the IS.

In the latest episode, a Melaka man, his wife from Kedah, and another man from Kedah have been identified as IS militants in Syria.

Raja Shahrom said members of the community need not be afraid to report information on IS-backed militants to the authorities as the authorities ensured the confidentiality and safety of informers.

"Do not be afraid that the authorities will arrest family members and friends arbitrarily as the authorities will not effect an arrest without strong evidence," he assured.

Socio-cultural expert, Prof Datuk Dr Zainal Kling also expressed concerns that the family unit played a very small role to curb such negative elements from creeping into the Malaysian society and infiltrating the minds of the people, especially youths.

Therefore, Zainal, who is also a member of Universiti Utara Malaysia Professors Council, said a community should reach out to ensure its members did not fall into the hands of IS militants.

"I do not deny the importance of family but youths now are even

ignoring the advice of parents, what more other family members, and they tend to listen to their peers or other people who are not family members.

"Community leaders should play their role of providing better understanding on the concept of jihad before community members get easily influenced by other irresponsible groups," he said.

Melaka Women, Family and Community Development Executive Councillor, Datuk Latifah Omar said the family institution should be strengthened to give youths a stronger sense of identity.

She said with stronger identity, the community structure itself would be able to repel the IS influence.

"The community and family should have a symbiotic relationship in which both need each other mutually. Several programmes on enhancing such structures have been conducted in Melaka," she noted.

Latifah also reminded the cyber community to also play their role in deterring the spread of IS militancy by observing and reporting their online groups to the authorities if there was something suspicious.

- Bernama